

**TESTIMONY OF THE
DEPARTMENT OF INLAND FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE
BEFORE THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON INLAND
FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE
IN OPPOSITION to L.D. 177**

An Act to Expand Moose Hunting Opportunities

SPONSORED BY: Senator SAVIELLO of Franklin

DATE OF HEARING: April 2, 2013

Good afternoon Senator Dutremble, Representative Shaw and members of the Inland Fisheries and Wildlife Committee. I am Bill Swan, Director of the Licensing Division at the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, speaking in opposition to **L.D. 177**.

L.D. 177 would require that 10% of the moose permits be auctioned off to licensed guides and persons associated with commercial sporting camps. While the department recognizes that this would result in substantial additional business for people with the winning bids, it cannot support this proposal as these are permits which would have previously been awarded to average Maine resident hunters, many of whom have been waiting a lifetime to receive a permit. The department feels that this proposal would not be viewed as fair by the average Maine resident who applies for a moose permit each year. In addition, the auction of approximately 400 permits per year would substantially negatively impact the revenue generated by the current auction of 10 moose permits. The current auction of 10 moose permits generates over \$100,000 per year, all of which goes to support Maine's Conservation Education Program.

L.D. 177 would also increase the moose permit allocation for nonresident and alien hunters from the current 10% up to 15%. While this would certainly result in an increase in economic activity from these additional nonresident hunters coming to Maine, the Committee should consider that this would also result in approximately 200 fewer permits each year being allocated to Maine resident hunters.

One interesting aspect of L.D. 177 is that it requires that the system ensure that applicants who apply over a number of consecutive years are guaranteed to eventually receive a permit. The department is in agreement with this concept. In fact, with the changes to the system recently passed by the Legislature, the vast majority of all long term Maine resident applicants will indeed be awarded a permit over the next few years as long as the number of permits allocated each year does not decrease significantly. Making this a

guarantee for resident hunters would be a reasonably easy thing to do. The situation for nonresident applicants is quite different because they only get 10% of the allocated permits each year. While we could guarantee a permit for long term nonresident applicants, the number of years of application required would be much higher than for resident applicants. The department looks forward to working with the Committee on this aspect of L.D. 177.

L.D. 177 also proposes to do away with the ability for a moose permit applicant to apply so that they receive their bonus points for the year while also indicating that they do not want to win a permit that year. This is a new provision that was recently put in place by the Legislature. It has been very popular with our customers and we are opposed to eliminating this option. There are many applicants who, for various reasons, do not want to win a permit in a given year but still want to receive their bonus points for applying.

Lastly, L.D. 177 would eliminate the department's current biologically based moose management system and replace it with a permit issuing formula. The permit formula does not include the ability to manage moose within Maine based on changes resulting from biological, environmental or social factors. This formula could result in the decline of the moose population in some parts of the state. In other areas the moose harvest that is mandated would exceed publicly derived moose population objectives. In the end a biologically based management system that allows the department to adjust to new information about the population levels, biological factors such as reproductive rates and calf mortality rates as well as social considerations like the public's interest in moose viewing opportunity, will be eliminated. The proposed bill replaces it with a permit issuing formula that is not sensitive to the factors that are part of a responsible wildlife management system. A memo from our moose biologist that provides more specific information about the department's concerns with this bill and the limitations it places on moose management in Maine will be provided.

I would be glad to answer any questions at this time or during the work session.